

The British library	Oral History section
Ref. No.: B02 3rd gen male	Wav Files: Refs:
Collection title: The Gift of Togetherness	
Interviewees surname: Ahmed	Title:
Interviewees forenames: Mohammed Kaswar	Sex: Male
Generation:	DOB:
Occupation:	
Dates of recordings and tracks: 11/08/2014	
Location of Interviews: MMU business school- Room 6.33	
Name of interviewer:	
Type of Recorder: Roland	
Total No. of tracks: 1 48khz	Reading format: Wav 16bit
Mono or stereo: Stereo	
Burned to CD/DVD: No	
Interview Duration: 00:53:47	
Additional materials: Photos taken	
Copyright/clearance: Received	
Interviewers additional comments:	

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Thank you so much for joining us today can you just for the record tell me your name, age and the generation that you're in?

My name is Mohammed Kauser Ahmed, I am 22 years old at the moment and I am a 3rd generation Bangladeshi Muslim in the UK.

Thank you Kauser, if you can tell me a bit about yourself then?

Well, I'm at the moment a masters student just finishing off my final year and working part time at the moment as well as a customer service advisor and I have been doing that for the last 5 years or so. To be honest, with myself at the moment its just working towards my career path as a business analyst so nothing much at the moment, its just literally education and work.

Okay Kauser you said that you are doing your masters, what are you doing your masters in?

Its literally in business as a whole, do something which I'm really studying all my life, something which my dad and his dad been interested in all their life, so something just along the lines of the family tradition but at the same time something I'm pretty knowledgeable in as well.

Okay and you said you work as a customer service advisor, who do you work for?

I work for Guinness northern accounting association, a really large housing association in the UK. I just work at the customer service department literally looking after current tenants and hopefully tenants we can secure in the future.

You been working there for five years you said?

Yeah 4 or 5 years.

I'm guessing you enjoy it?

I do and I don't really... Most of the time working in a call centre its just more like a stepping stone to help you reach other career paths and with myself I think just me being in that particular business and particular organisation you know its literally door opening for other career paths within that organisation. I think at the moment it's a stepping stone because the traits learnt within the customer service area centre, I'm more for the customer service centre but hopefully within the next year or so I'm hoping to get promoted.

Okay that's great, that's great. So what about your career aspirations then, you said you wanted to become a business analyst, what does that actually consist of?

Business analyst role consists of having an independent business and actually working either to maintain or actually progress that particular company; so in the terms of my company Guinness northern county, they'd work with different business research methods such as pestle and swot analysis to understand where the business is at the moment and see where they can expand and what areas of the business at the moment are pretty weak. With that particular department at the moment I am aware they are using a lot of the tools I have used at university hence what I think it be a great opportunity for myself.

So you're looking for a career path in your current company or are you looking to go elsewhere once you finished your masters?

At the moment, as I finish my masters, I'm hoping to build my way up in my current company because you need to start somewhere. Now I'm thinking if I do start at this organisation it's a very friendly organisation, family oriented organisation and its pretty near where I live so its an easy commute as well, so starting there would be a great start for me obviously where I go from there we'll see as time comes.

Okay, that's great what about your family then? Do you want to quickly tell me your family tree? How many brothers and sisters etc.?

Yeah, I've got 2 brothers, 2 younger brothers and one younger sister who's the youngest in the house, mum dad and well if you go onto relatives it's just going to expand and expand.

Of course yeah so what I want to ask is about your parents, what do they do?

At the moment my dad owns a restaurant at East Westwood in Oldham and he owns another restaurant in Liverpool which he is more of a silent partner in, just to start the business off. He pretty much works 6 sometimes 7 days a week as being the manager there consists of him being there constantly, looking after the staff and making sure everything is running smoothly. My mum at the moment is a housewife, she used to work at social... She used to work for social services, this was 7 or 8 years ago but having my little sister she decided to relax and stay home with the kids.

Oh right, she's a full time housewife now?

Yeah.

Okay and what about your 2 younger brothers, are they in school?

Yeah, one of my brothers is in college at the moment going on to his 2nd year at college and my youngest brother he is at school year 10 at the moment and sister is obviously at primary school.

Oh right she's very young.

Yeah, really young.

Right, that's great. Okay, so Kauser you were saying you are 3rd generation British Muslim, so can you just tell me from which side are you 3rd generation?

From my mother's side she was born in this country, she studied in this country hence why she did pretty well with work where she got her career aspect. Usually you don't tend to see many people from back home, many 2nd generation family members reach such high career paths so I'm pretty humble that my mum as she has been you know doing the work she has been doing as well.

And your dad?

My dad is from Bangladesh but even from being from Bangladesh I think with the assistance from my mum has helped him grow in this country and understand the life in this country which is very different to everything in Bangladesh.

Okay so what about your grandparents?

My grand parents from both sides are originally from Bangladesh, my grandparents from my dad's side did move here after my dad came to the country and my mum's mum and dad they were born in Bangladesh but they moved to this country in their late 20's, so hence why they had my mum in this country.

Okay that's great so just going back to your dad when he came to this country, you said he came here quite early?

Well we're talking... he is probably around the age of 20 - 22 give or take, that's when he came to this country.

Okay and how did he come?

Well to be honest it was my mum who went home to get married and she went back to Bangladesh, she met my dad and they got married and slowly my mum brought my dad over to this country and all went from there.

And when was this?

We are talking about 1991 prior to a few years, prior to when I was born 1991.

Okay, why did they come?

Well to be honest I think my mum advised him of the opportunities he'll have here. I mean back home where opportunities were very rare, I mean things you can do... I mean back... We are talking 1990's, there's very few things you could do and the only way you can make money in Bangladesh as in every other country where you have a lot of money, but Bangladesh was in a totally different situation that you needed a very very large amount of money to do anything. So obviously, my mum advised him of a few career opportunities and advised him if you come here you can have a family, live here and hopefully get a few businesses going and I think that was appealing to my dad at that point.

Okay, I mean you probably wouldn't know how he felt when he came over? Leaving his family behind?

I think he felt how most people from Bangladesh when they come to the country at first. They are very scared because they don't know many people here and secondly the fact like you said leaving their family and friends, leaving everyone behind its not common to see someone leave their country behind going to another country that's alien to them; but I think the fact that my mum had a very large family to help him at that particular point in life helped him quite a lot and I think that's what helped him perceive the UK as his second home.

So I don't know if you talked to your dad about this but do you know if he had any kind of culture shock when he came over?

To be honest I think it's the same with him and everyone that comes from Bangladesh. I mean there's not a massive difference in the western world and Bangladesh, in actual culture I think it was more to do with his actual religion... I think there was a big cultural difference with the religion because back in Bangladesh where the religion of Islam was portrayed more openly and it was literally everywhere you go, I think it was more closed in the UK because obviously coming to the UK and coming to a

different country which isn't really of Islamic traditions and is completely different for my dad... So he did have a culture shock but obviously it was something that grew over time and something that he got used to.

Okay, if we can move onto the reason why we are here and talk about gift giving and your traditions when giving, I believe you brought a gift with you today for the record because we can't see can you just explain what the gift is?

Well, its literally... You can call it beads but within the Islamic tradition it's called and known as a tasbeeh. You can say its necklace format containing well 33 beads now, when I say 33 beads its has a religious symbol behind it, you have to recite certain things... There are 33 different times and the reason I brought this with me is because it means quite a lot to me where it came from and how it came to me and how I received it hence why I brought it with me.

So please tell me?

Yeah, this one was brought by my grandparents when I was very young from the holy city of Mecca. Now, Mecca being the sacred destination for all Muslims, it was brought when I was really young. One of the reasons, probably one of my first memories, one of the very first time I was introduced to the concept of Mecca so I've cherished this since then. I mean I keep it close to me at all times.

So you said it comes from Mecca, that's got significance for you. Why is it sentimental for you?

The fact that its sentimental is the fact that it wasn't just brought by one person it was a group of family members that went handpicked it out for me and the fact that it came from, I mean it may seem like normal beads to you and anyone else but to me it's the fact that when they went out they hand picked it for me and some of the family members aren't around today. It means more to me than most things so the actual thought value counts more than the item itself.

So why did they bring this particular thing to you?

First of all there is this religious observation behind where you suppose to do the prayers. You are supposed to read... You are supposed to keep Allah in mind at all times so that was the main concept in bringing it to me as well, but secondly it was showing love and affection. I mean, they brought quite a few other things as well but certain things mean more to you and them bringing an actual tasbeeh to me meant more to me. Buying everyone a certain item, it was just handpicked for me, just purely for me by a few members of the family who aren't here today hence why it means more to me than most.

So how did they actually give it to you? They got it, they came back from a different country?

Well we usually... I don't know how it works in other families when someone comes back from a destination to this country the family get together, you know have a chat and then they open the luggage and start handing out the gifts to everyone part by part and when it came to me I was really young but from what I can remember some of the elders were arguing who was to give it to me. That's what made it more special, the fact that it was more of a unit rather than singular person giving it me, them arguing showed me that it was brought with care and brought with a lot of love.

Who ended up giving to you then?

It was my granddad, my mums dad who is still here at the moment, he's the one that actually ended

up giving it to me because he's the one that opened up the luggage and he made sure no one else got their hands on it, he was the one that actually passed it over to me.

That's great. Now you talked about the way you open the luggage with everyone, is that a common thing in your family?

I think it's a cultural thing because usually, not the fact that they open the luggage, the fact that when someone comes from another country I think it's a cultural thing that everyone gets together, have a meal and have a laugh. All the members of the family, to see how they are just to see you could call it a miniature party without the singing and dancing obviously; but where everyone sits together and has a big meal and following the meal... I think the person who has returned from the destination, not as a moral obligation, but more of a I don't know, more of a commitment to the family to hand out gifts hand, out presents and treats to everyone, I think its more of a cultural thing than just what my family celebrate.

So is this a...? If I call it a tradition, is that every time someone comes back a destination no matter how small it is?

I think its more to do with the elders now. I think its as you go down the generation line you go down the people in the family, the younger they are the less common it is. I think its within the elders because they've got that thing, that different type of love that different type of respect that many people have. I think its the elders that like getting together, sitting together with everyone and having a good laugh giving out gifts, literally making everyone happy. Because you see I've got uncles and aunties who do go on holidays but they still do have a laugh when they come back, joke and giggle its just not as much how my grandma and granddad and elders would do it.

So do you not do anything like this?

With me personally, actually I am thinking about it. I've only been on one particular holiday and coming back from the holiday I think it differentiates really, because with my granddad and grandma when the elders go on holiday its not really a holiday its more like a sabbatical if you can say. They go away for a few months so you don't see them for some time but with myself I go away 5 to 7 days so you can say I wasn't really gone but when I do come back I don't really get together with everyone and throw a party. I personally go around to each house and deliver gifts one by one and make my way around.

Say you've gone to holiday and come back, what sort of gifts would you get for your family members?

I think I'm following my granddads footsteps, I think its more sentimental than monetary value. I bring things for people which means more... So for example when I went to Turkey I brought my sister pads and books but not regular A4 pads, like it had embroidery pads with different pad locks, things that have the Turkish culture and value to it. I mean you can buy pads here in the UK, you can go to the local stationary but something that brought the culture of Turkey, something that means a lot to her, something she can look at and say my big brother went and brought me something different so something with a lot of sentimental value that means more to them.

Oh cool. If I can just say, if I can just go back to your granddad, when they bring gifts back do they bring gifts out for everybody?

Pretty much yeah, I mean it must cost him quite a bit, though when they do go there's all sorts... They bring back perfume, different types of essences, they bring back clothes, books and pretty much

something for everyone whether its small or big everyone will end up with something.

Do they hand it out individually or this is for this person and that person?

Certain things, I mean if they go for a certain purpose they may hand that out individually, for example my uncle was very ill at that moment and my uncle being my granddads son, he individually hand some things over. Also, like I said when they handed my beads over, on a general basis this is for this person handing it out but sometimes they do hand pick certain things out and hand it out individually.

And how would they hand it out? Just as it came you know, gift wrap it you know?

I think its just as it came, they would gift wrap it, literally everyone at that moment which is being opened sit around, so they wouldn't really have the time to think about gift wrapping it delivered there and then at that point.

Based on that fact you got beads from the holy city of Mecca, are you very close to your religion?

Well here I would say no whereas others would say yes; and the reason I say no is within our religion of Islam there are like certain things you need to do and act and I don't personally feel I meet those criteria on a regular enough basis. Other people may say yes is probably the way I act and my attitude is but me, on a personal level, I really don't feel I meet all the criteria of being what you would call pious being close to my religion.

What do you mean by that?

You have your normal actual things which need to be done on a daily basis such as your namaaz, your prayers, which are there but as well as that to be close to your religion. It is not just about praying your namaaz, its more about being a better person, its about showing others care, love and respect. Its not just about standing on a mat and praying, its about following it as a person, its about being a better person, the best person you can be, always speaking the truth, always keeping your parents happy not making your parents upset, keeping your family as one... So I think there's so much more to it, I don't really complete but in one sense I do feel like I try but in another sense I do think to myself I can be a lot better, there's so much more I can do but I still need to step it up.

So you are saying other people would see you as a religious person, what do you mean by that?

I think it's the way I come across being not very quiet keeping myself to myself and trying to stay humble, I think it comes across as... People perceive me as being a really nice and quiet guy going to the mosque to pray every now and then, people only see those aspects of my life because I keep myself to myself, I think that's what gives the people the perception of me being close to myself but obviously with myself I know there's so much more to it that needs to be completed.

Okay, what about your family are they religious?

I could say yeah because my mum and dad try to keep themselves the best they can... I mean they try to keep away from all sorts of you know... In the local Asian community a lot of people get together to talk, there's lots of talks regularly, we can call it back chatting where people talk, we try to refrain any acts as such they go about their daily business and try to pray every day and literally do what needs to be done. Being in the actual culture we in it is more difficult to follow the religion your in but again that's not really an excuse to not follow your religion, its just struggles and difficulties I would

say even then struggles and difficulties are there to overcome so I can't see why.

You made a great point there that it's hard in this country to follow your religion, why would you say that is?

I think its got to do with the work routine and the actual routine you get in this country. I mean I can give you an example, back in the day in Bangladesh when my dad was there, when it was time of prayer everyone would stop working, shops would be closed and everyone would go to the local mosque and pray and everyone would go back to work. Whereas in todays country you work from 9-5 basis or you work from 5-12 basis whatever time of day you don't really have time to stop to go pray and come back; you have to pray 5 times a day you might be in an organisation where you have one lunch break and one 15 minute break and that's not enough. Because we've got a few prayers out of the day to actually keep those commitments in hand is more difficult than say Bangladesh or being in Mecca.

Ok that's fair enough so I wanted to talk about your gift giving behaviour if we were to call it so you're a British Bengali you are 3rd generation, you were brought up in this country so tell me about your gift giving habits? For example let me say, do you celebrate birthdays?

When you say celebrate birthdays, yes and no with the celebration of birthdays its... People tend to throw parties standard culture is birthday party birthday cake so you know with myself its not so much the birthday cake I do celebrate it yeah but not in that sense but I usually tend to at home my mum makes some food literally different kind of curry on that particular day and my friends will all go out to eat but we don't normally follow through it like all happy birthdays here's a cake let's all have a big party not along the lines of that more along the lines off mum making special curries and going with friends just to eat.

Why is that? Why don't you follow the normal traditions then?

I think its in that sense where the religious values come into play, again I mean with birthdays itself you are not really supposed to commemorate and celebrate days as such but the reason my mum cooks different food and that is because of the love my mum has... My son is getting older so you know she's gonna cook different food so I think in that sense my mum is making it out of love. I think the reason I go out with my friends on that day as well not in the sense of 'oh happy birthday, lets go out and eat' but in more of sense 'wow, he's turning old, lets go out, lets just have a bit of fun, lets pick on him and lets just enjoy ourselves' more like that.

Okay, on your birthday then you just turned for example, this year you turn 22, would you get gifts from your friends and family?

Yeah, I mean they do tend to give me gifts but me personally I would rather prefer not getting gifts on my birthday because its one of those days when you do have your birthday and you do go around and people do find out its your birthday. The first thing people ask is what did you get and me personally I'm not a big fan of gifts, I mean actual materialistic items do not win me at all. I think its one of the things I've grown up with, I mean I do understand yeah I really enjoy my cars I like this I really like that but at the end of the day it's a materialistic item. With that I know there's no sense of love behind that item, it's just going to be an item that's going to be here X amount of time. Its going to go sooner or later its going to vanish, its going to get stolen, whatever happens... So I do get gifts but I don't really cherish those gifts or the fact that's its not a sentimental gift it doesn't really mean as much to me, so even when I do get gifts I am happy I've got a gift, I'm thankful to whoever does provide me with the gift and going out their way to get the gift but at the same time the gift at the

end of the day its just a gift, I mean it will vanish one day.

Right okay so what about vice versa as in if it's somebody else's birthday?

I think with myself its again similar to me, I'd rather not give them a gift I'd rather give them something sentimental, something they'll cherish. I mean if it was to go out I'd rather go somewhere... I mean for example I go out with some friends I'd take them out somewhere where they haven't been before, so if we go out to eat we go out of the way and end up in a completely different... We eat good food rather give them the sentimental value, going out to a really nice place not even a physical gift more of a memorable gift, so yeah not really materialistic.

Right okay going back to you getting some gifts on your birthday. I mean you said you know you are not really into that, you rather go out fair enough but if somebody was to give you a gift what sort of stuff would they give you?

Ah well getting gifts, I mean I've been really blessed with a really good family so when they do get gifts they do go out of their way to get really, I mean gifts in high value so I mean I do appreciate that hence why me rejecting the gift is seen as very degrading so they do get... I mean watches, perfume, tablets here and there different things usually it is them perfumes they get because my wardrobe is full of perfumes, now that's the gift you get for an everyday guy but yeah literally yeah, pretty much here and there what your standard guy gets that's what I'll get.

Right okay what about the more traditional, more British traditional gifts for example mother's day and father's day?

With myself, in our religion, mother's day and father's day shouldn't be on a certain day, you are not supposed to... That's one of the things I was saying, being a good Muslim is not about being a good Muslim one day throughout the year. It's about being a good Muslim everyday of your life and in all honesty mother's day and father's day should be every single day if you are being a good Muslim. Now with myself, I try to treat my parents as well as I can and try to look after them as much as I can but at the same time when it is mother's day and father's day even though I do spontaneously buy them gifts on random days which I don't have a problem with, because me buying gifts for my parents in particular makes me feel good because they are my parents at the end of the day. On mother's and father's day I do still go out of my way and buy my mum a bunch of flowers or for my dad I will buy a shirt or perfume here and there. The reason I do that is not because its mother's or father's day, I do it out of the fact that my dad may go to work or my mum may speak to someone else and they may say 'oh my sons bought me this' or 'my son has bought me that' and in no way I want my mum and dad to turn around and say 'oh my son hasn't bought me anything'. So for that reason and that reason only I do buy them something on those particular days, purely because I don't want them to feel as if oh its mothers or fathers days and everyone else's sons or daughters are buying them something and when someone else's mother or father turns around says my sons bought me this and my son has bought me that or he's done this and that... I don't want my parents to turn around and feel as if oh my son hasn't done anything, like he's not bought me anything on that particular day. I know they won't and I know my parents are not like that but its me thinking like that. I don't want them to, you know there are a lot of people out there who will come out and brag oh my son does this and my daughter does this for me, I don't want them to ever feel inferior to anyone else and such because I know people can hurt with their words, so just to eliminate that part of anything I will get them something.

Okay so from what you are saying I can see that you've got a lot of love for your parents. I mean when you talk about them I can see that your face just lights up, every time you talk about them, I mean

what do they mean to you?

Literally everything, my parents... The fact that they've brought me up, they've you know raised me, fed me and they've made me who I am. I mean they literally mean everything to me because at the end of the day I think a person is the way they are because of how their parents treat and bring them up. I think you find moral values in those who've been brought up the right way and when I say the right way everyone has their own way, but there are certain times when I think when they refer back to the Islamic teachings I think it really helps to bring up the ideal... Well what you want as a child, the ideal type of person because there are certain things you don't want even if you have your own kids so bringing someone up the way they have or bringing someone up the way they follow the traditions not the traditions the actual teachings of the Muslim way, I think that's the way they've done it and that's why they mean so much to me because they've actually not allowed me to get in harms way and they've actually refrained me from getting into trouble as such. If I have done anything wrong they'd make me understand and they'd actually sit down and talk to me rather than yeah do whatever so its that thing where they've really kept me secluded from everything, actually refrained from danger that's what I'm grateful for most.

And do you think you would install that particular behaviour on your own kids?

Definitely, the easy they've brought me up the way they have looked after me definitely its something that I'd look to my kids. Hopefully having my mum and dad there as well and having them there as support I think I couldn't ask for anything else.

That's really good that, so let me also ask you then you know we have talked a bit about mother's day and father's day what about the not so traditional ones like what about valentine's day? Do you celebrate valentine's day?

No.

Not even in the past?

No. I am not a big fan of it whether being in a relationship or not valentine's day has never been a thing because again its one of those things... I mean, first of all I know the relationship and stuff isn't right but obviously you have that moment in life when you go through things and you do fall into things and even when I have fallen into things it still has the same value. But I've never ever ever celebrated it because if you love someone then you should love them every day of your life, but again the only reason, if I ever did get anything, I would never get them a ring or like that but I would probably get them a single rose or something sentimental rather than anything else. This is just for the fact that no one can ever turn around and be like 'oh you didn't buy me anything ' like oh my person bought me this and my person bought me that but with myself no, I honestly would never... I'm a very spontaneous person I'm the type of guy that would get up on a random day and say lets go London, lets just go London and go sightseeing, so I mean I can on a weekly basis we'd go out. valentine's day isn't a day in my calendar that's separated from the rest its just a normal everyday thing, I mean we will go out on valentine's day if not we will go out on another day but whoever I'm with or whoever I talk to they always understand my thoughts and they understand the reason and why I don't need to celebrate a day like that.

So would you just go anywhere random?

I'm literally very spontaneous I mean one day we might go go karting or another day we might go sightseeing or another day I mean literally anything and everything a nice long drive or a ice long walk

on the beach, literally very spontaneous anything and everything.

What about if your wife or partner bought you a gift would you accept it?

I mean that's the thing, they wouldn't or they haven't because it's something that I make clear on the time because I don't really need gifts. I mean obviously they do go out of their way to still get gifts, I understand why they do that from love or whatever but at the same time I do make it very clear that I don't really need gifts. I'd rather just go out have something or just share an experience together rather than just buy each other gifts and things that go tomorrow and vanish.

You know, before we were talking about your parents and giving them gifts for mother's day and father's day, now you said your dad's dad is still here or your mum's dad is still here?

Both are here.

Both are here?

Yeah.

That's great, what about your mum and dad what do they get their mum and dad for mother's day and father's day, do they get anything at all?

No, purely because there is no such thing as father's day or mother's day or there was no father's day and mother's day in Bangladesh. Obviously my mum's mum and dad did come to this country earlier on but then they've got this perception of Bangladesh in their bloodstream so I think it's, you know, it doesn't exist in their mind, father's day and mother's day does not. I don't think I know father's day and mother's day does not exist because it's one of those things that it was never there throughout their life, especially my dad's dad whose never pretty much Bangladesh he only came to this country, to the UK about 5/6 years ago, but even my mum's dad he's been here for a quite a while sometimes it doesn't really exist it's not a date that they can commemorate the fact that they've been brought up with no such thing as father's day and mother's day where they were actually born it's not something they really see.

So is that the same with birthdays and stuff?

Yeah yeah very much because we've been very blessed and lucky to get a monetary advantage to them because my granddad and grandma I think with a lot of other peoples' granddads and grandmas have not been very financially capable in Bangladesh and after coming to this country obviously the okay in Bangladesh is ridiculous compared to this country. I mean what you'll get six or seven pounds in this country in Bangladesh you'll probably get forty or fifty pence so anyone who lived in Bangladesh knows that back then in the 90's pre 90's finance was pretty difficult to come by so birthdays and everything was literally was one of those things that wasn't really commemorated. No one really bothered too much with it really you know in all honesty some people don't know their actual birthdays because they don't commemorate it or they don't really see it as something important.

Right okay so if I can then move on to Christmas and new year and Easter.

Yeah.

You know you've been brought up in this country, do you celebrate Christmas or Easter?

Definitely not one of them purely because Christmas and Easter is a religious observation for the Christian religion. Celebrating Christmas or Easter does show that your following that particular religion for a particular aspect, its like telling a Christian do you celebrate Eid? It's not something we do or think we'd do. I am aware that there are certain people who are doing it but again I don't know what their reason is to that but in my religion, no, nowhere near...

Okay that's fine I mean you don't celebrate it. Do you do anything on Eid day, sorry you do celebrate it do you do anything on Christmas or Easter day?

Because in all honesty my organisation is open 24 hours 7 days a week and most of the people that do work there are Christian, they do have to have two or three people in that time and I personally volunteer to work purely because I'm not going to be doing anything, its not a day that I celebrate. I tend to usually go into work and do that shift whereas obviously if I don't do it then some of the Christians who are celebrating it may have to work rather than them coming in on a day that they celebrate, I just go in and do my share of the work.

Okay that's great Kauser. So I really appreciate you know the answers you have given me so far, just a few more questions you know to ask you so can I... You are south Asian?

Yeah.

You are Bengali south Asian Muslim in this country, can you just tell me has that given you any challenges being a south Asian in this country or is it you know certain aspects that you're uncomfortable with or anything like that?

To be honest this country where equality and diversity is massive I haven't personally come across any issues myself. I mean, people usually complain that they've had problems with their culture when they've come over difficulties but me personally I've been blessed with... I've not come across any difficulties on a personal level, I have heard of with other people but with myself I've come across no problems to date. I mean I don't know if that's because of the way I come across or the way I approach people but nothing at all. I think the fact that equality and diversity are such massive things in this country I think it helps quite a large amount. I think with those particular laws in place I mean has helped get where we are and is helping me go as far as I can go.

What about the fact that you're a Muslim in this country?

I think of the 9/11 incidence that's put everyone on an actual warning type of basis. I mean the way how the media are portraying Muslims on a general basis I think the way we have been portrayed is very unjust and unfair, because I think with people its literally like the term where the sheep will follow the herd because in the term of the media the herd they just explain one general topic about Muslims to everyone and now everyone does portray everyone does signify us and compare us to certain things which we think are unfair. Being a Muslim in this country I mean not on a personal level but again I have seen it happen everywhere, there has been a lot of scrutiny and there has been a lot of violence and a lot of other issues being a Muslim but again that's not anyone's particular fault, It's the way how its been presented to people by the media and I think that's where the actual fault lies.

And how do you feel about that?

I very strongly disagree with the way they are doing it. I think there's two sides to every story and when I say there's two sides to every story I don't mean the fact that there's two sides to doing the deeds that people are doing across the world. I mean we're totally against that anyway, I mean its

hard to call people like that Muslim anyway but you know I don't know why they do it... The way we've been perceived as in just perceived from one angle I'm really against that the fact that we've been compared... Every Muslim is being compared to either one or two particular groups of violence so every time someone who makes... May not be as knowledgeable to someone or may not go out to seek further knowledge, they may just see Muslims of a group of angry people who wear turbans who go around trying to attack people because they are not Muslim. So the perception we've been given, I'm really against that I really think that its not fair but again one person doesn't make a difference it takes a group to make an actual difference when they are actual group gatherings again its somehow perceived as you know, like Muslims on the rise Muslims this and Muslims that so I think the perception is very negative. I think the publicity we are getting is very negative so I'm against like all the publicity we are getting, everything as such...

Right okay glad to hear your take on that. Now just a few questions then we can you know finish this. You're a south Asian do you have any friends that are not south Asian?

I do, I have a lot of friends who are to be honest... I've got friends who are all sorts. I've got British, I've got American, I've got people from Africa... I've got quite a large friend circle and that's got something to do with the interaction as well.

So I just wanna ask you, the friends that are not south Asian if you were to get a gift for them or if they was to get you a gift would there be any kind of barrier that would allow you or them to get you gifts based on the fact that you're a Muslim or Asian?

There wouldn't be a barrier if they were to give me a gift, obviously again bringing you a gift and going out of their time and way to buy you a gift I'd understand it'd be very degrading to say no to that. I'd understand if someone gave a gift like that I would accept it but then again it depends on the actual time and situation because if they were to give a Christmas gift it'd be difficult for me to accept such a thing. I couldn't really give anything back because at the end of the day I don't really celebrate Christmas and again Christmas cards I understand the tradition and I can understand them giving me Christmas cards but its not something I could give back purely because its not something I participate in.

So what about if they gave you or what about you...? Are there certain gifts that you wouldn't give a non-south Asian non-Muslim because you find it taboo?

Nothing in today's Asian times everyone's very very... Everyone wants to know about everyone I think everyone is more secluded in pre 2000's but now everyone's willing to understand everyone's culture so I think giving them a gift from my culture or my tradition or my religion I mean they do cherish... As with the friends I have they're really interested in my interests they're really interested in what I do and really like to see different nationalities, they like to experience so giving them a gift from my tradition and religion or culture I feel... I mean I'm very happy and humble and I mean very happy when I do give them something as such because it shows my willingness to make them understand of who I am and I love the fact that they show an interest to want to know who I am and my language and my culture and who what I hold so its not really a taboo its more of personal interest really. If they are the type of people that want to get to know you they are more than happy to accept those gifts.

Thank you so much Kauser, I just want to ask you one more final thing, you were saying about Eid and how you want to other people celebrate Eid and you wouldn't celebrate Christmas and stuff like so I'm guessing Eid is a Muslim...?

Yeah.

A Muslim tradition?

Yeah.

Yeah, what is Eid?

Eid commemorates two different occasions. Eid commemorates, I mean certain occasions in the Muslim calendar that took place in the prophets times, its to commemorate those days. I mean Eid is also a day of God giving you not a day, a celebratory day for either doing hard work throughout the thirty days of fasting or to commemorate a single occasion with in the actual Islamic calendar. Eid is not so much a day of celebration it's a day of reward more than celebration. I think people will get them mixed up, it's a day of reward for not... For doing what you've been told to do but for striving and struggling to see what other people have done. Eid is more of a say of reward and I think everyone should take that on board and use that day not obviously to go against everything they've done in the last few days but to build upon the last few.

And as Christians give everyone, well not everyone traditionally you would give Christmas gifts on Christmas day do you give Eid gifts on Eid day?

Not in... I mean when you say gifts within Eid it is the prophet (pbuh) used to say you know to buy clothes, fresh clothes on the particular day so we follow the gifts. We try to keep it to the Islamic way as possible, we do get new clothes or we'd probably gift each other new clothes for that particular day but that aside we don't really give actual gifts we do want needs to be done for that particular day and we follow whatever is written in the scriptures for that particular day and keep it like that.

So you said you buy clothes for each other?

Yeah.

Who do you mean by that?

When we say each other probably my mum and dad will go out and buy clothes for the whole family or my dad will buy clothes for my mum or I may buy clothes for my dad taking him out so its just literally, you know, buying clothes for the family, intermediate family for that particular day so they've got a fresh set of clothes to wear.

So when would you actually give them the gift?

Prior to the actual day so they can wear it on the day so anytime prior to the day, usually some people do it two weeks in advance or some people do it a week in advance. I mean my parents would do it in a week or two in advance, me personally I'm a bit of a late person I'll do it like a day or two in advance so yeah prior to the day.

And how would you give it to them?

Its just one of those things where you walk into the room and just like 'oh mum I've got you a few gifts' its not really I don't wrap it up or it's just like there are some Eid clothes its just its not obligatory to do. Its just one of those things that you do its just been built into me, you just make sure you get things for everyone here and there so they can wear new clothes because again it comes

across as you see so many people buying clothes. If you don't buy a family member clothes that day when everyone else is wearing the clothes they'll be like the odd one out, you really don't want people to feel that way even if it is something small like a pair of trainers or even if it's a top, its something new to wear on the day.

And on the actual day, what do you do? Do you like have a meal?

Yeah, well we first get up and do our prayer, you do every Eid it's a separate prayer. Following that we do come home and our families get together and we do have a meal, we visit relatives houses we do have different meals throughout the day in different relatives houses, we all get together... Me personally at the end of the day, after visiting everyone who I've needed to visit, at the end of the day I will go out with my friends for a meal and celebrate Eid day with as many people as I can.

Okay and just touching on something that we touched upon you know before the way you give gifts and the way your parents and your grandparents have given gifts that's gradually changed you know... We don't really follow our parents' footsteps, are there any other differences or similarities that you've realised from your parents' behaviour and your behaviour compared to your grandparents behaviour?

I think the older generation are more sentimental with everything, I think its more about memories, more about values, more about family. Its more about that, I think the younger generation and the younger people its more about buying something that's more expensive and something that looks good or something that's big and wow, so I think the big difference is between is culture. I think with this country's culture instead, its about big expensive toys and buying things that cost a lot of money whereas back home its about buying things that are more to you because keeping in mind my grandparents are the same people who had to scratch and claw their way up... You know, they had to live on little food so value is more important and friendship and honesty is more important than giving someone a twenty thousand pound Rolex watch because again it's a watch and it's a materialistic item. If I chuck that out of the window that's it the watch is gone whereas with value you can never take that value away from someone. Its going to be embedded within that person and if you can share that value with people its going to create love and its going to create respect so I think that's the biggest gift you can give anyone.

And finally do you think you're the 3rd generation what the 4th 5th and 6th generation do you think that will change as well?

Yeah I think every generation will change, there's no doubt about that. I think you can see it within one generation between my mum's generation and my generation you can see the big differences there is no doubt. I think every generation will change, now its up to parents and its up to the upcoming parents to see how their kids will grow and its up to them to make sure their kids follow a certain path and not a path that will take them astray, but again only time can tell. I mean its one thing but in ten years time someone else listening to this might be a better person than me but again only time can really tell and you don't know what's going to happen.

Well thank you so much for coming in Kauser just would like to ask do you have anything that you want to add before we wrap this up?

No I mean we've covered pretty much every aspect of this interview.

Thank you so much for coming in.

Thank you.